

THE ECONOMY OF INDO-CHINA

1902 this edict was extended to Annam, Cochinchina, and Cambodia, and up to 1910 was the charter of labour in Indo-China.

Metayage continues to be current on Northern plantations, but it is not widespread except on big properties. Labourers much prefer seasonal work, with periodic returns to their native villages. *Metayers* show negligence in caring for the animals entrusted to them — notably, working them too hard and not feeding them enough. Bitter experience has made money advances infrequent. The *metayer*, though he has enough capital to buy seed and fertilizer, is usually very badly off. His contract is not an easy one, and after he has lived up to its hard terms he must pay his taxes and his workers. A good harvest affects his status favourably, and his social position is decidedly above that of labourers. But for him to be really well off, he must own his own ploughing animals and not run into debt. The *cai*, or foreman-intermediary between *metayer* and employer, is the enemy of both in his harsh treatment of the former, and in his exploitation of the latter. *Metayers'* and labourers' contracts are usually made through the village Notables; individual contracts do not exist. When the Notables are the middle-men, one may be sure that the labour contracted for is involuntary. In the guise of a new tax or *corvée*, the Notables can force any member of the commune to work for themselves or for the colonists.

It was estimated in 1933 that two-thirds of the Tonkinese are salaried workers for at least a part of every year. Work is difficult, they live from day to day, and only enjoy release from hunger at harvest time. Seasonal migrations are the rule in over-populated districts, though in certain of the provinces which have two rice crops the workers sometimes stay longer. Such labour is difficult to stabilize, the best

workers try never to hire out their labour far from their own villages, and prefer to eke out an existence near home through various minor industries, commerce, and fishing. Colonists have tried higher salaries and a plot of ground as inducements to make this floating proletariat take root, but such a system merges into *metayage*. Salaries differ enormously, depending on the season, the region, the abundance of labour, and the kind of work. Workers by the year are treated as part of the family and are paid partly in money and about half in kind. This arrangement is easier for the labourer, who is usually far from any other sources of supply. In his budget the worker spends about three-fourths for food, one-tenth for lodging, and about 4 per cent for clothes.¹

, A., *La Fvrmatum des Ctes« Se»afe*

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